Malory's Originality

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The re-evaluation of Malory's work which followed the appearance of Professor Vinaver's edition showed clearly that the second division—"The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius"—merited closer attention than it had previously received. Since it appeared that Caxton had reduced Tale II to about half its length in the Winchester manuscript, the relationship of this "Tale" to its source and to the whole body of Malory's work needed reconsideration. The main source had long been identified as the alliterative Morte Arthure, an anonymous fourteenth-century poem which survives in the unique Thornton manuscript. This manuscript, generally considered corrupt, is almost certainly a different version of the

Morte Arthure, or The Death of Arthur, ed. E. Brock, EETS-OS, No. 8 (London, 1871); I have used numbers in parentheses for reference to lines in this edition. For recent discussion of this poem, see William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960) and R. S. Loomis (ed.), Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1959), pp. 521-26.
poem from that which Malory knew; nevertheless, it is helpful in a study of Malory's use of source materials. Such a study can, of course, throw much light upon his ultimate literary purposes.

The *Morte Arthure* is a long poem; the Thornton manuscript contains 4,346 lines. Its verse form is the four-stressed, alliterative line, and its style is robust, direct, and action-packed. It glories in deeds of strength and courage, and it gives far more space to detailed and bloody accounts of battles than to worship of ladies or to descriptions of knightly courtesy. The poem opens with Arthur already securely established in the kingship, as lord both of the British Isles and of large territories on the continent. The action begins on New Year's Day, when messengers arrive from the Emperor Lucius of Rome to demand that Arthur journey there to pay the homage and tribute owing since the time of King Uther. Arthur entertains the messengers at a feast and then sends them back to Lucius with his answer: instead of visiting Rome to pay homage, he will invade the lands of the Emperor. In this undertaking Arthur has the support of many thousands of knights, whose strength and splendor strike terror into the hearts of the messengers.

Both rulers prepare for war, each assuming personal command of his armies. Before leaving Britain at the head of his invasion force, Arthur proclaims Mordred his viceroy and consigns to him the care of both the kingdom and the Queen. Mordred is unhappy about this assignment, preferring to join

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*The fact that "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" contains many alliterative passages not paralleled in the Thornton MS attests the probable existence of a lost version of the *Morte Arthure*. A discussion of this hypothetical lost version may be found in an article by Tania Vorontzoff, "Malory's Story of Arthur's Roman Campaign," *Medium Aevum*, VI (1937), 99–121, and in an article by Eugène Vinaver and E. V. Gordon, "New Light on the Text of the Alliterative Morte Arthure," *Medium Aevum*, VI (1937), 84–85. Vinaver summarizes these longer discussions; see *Works*, pp. 1360–61.*
the campaign, but Arthur is adamant. Aboard the ship from Sandwich to Barfleet, Arthur dreams of a fight between a dragon and a huge black bear, from which the dragon emerges victorious. The interpretation of the dream is that Arthur will overcome either a giant or the tyrants who oppress his people. Arthur's first act after disembarking is to fight and overcome a giant who has been killing the inhabitants of the land.

Having disposed of the giant, Arthur then begins his campaign against Lucius. In the course of the war, there take place the events familiar to the readers of heroic poetry: urgent pleas for help by those whose lands have been ravaged, exchange of challenges between King and Emperor, skirmishing and taking of prisoners, single combats and full-scale battles. Most of these happenings are blood-drenched. At last, after the loss of many brave knights on both sides, Arthur meets Lucius on the field of battle and kills him. Pursuing his advantage, he then presses on into Italy to establish his mastery of all Europe with the proud boast that he will be crowned by the Pope at Christmas. At this climactic point in the story, the usefulness of the poem to Malory ceased; he ended here his narrative of the Roman war.

This brief summary of the first 3,218 lines of the Thornton Morte Arthure indicates a close parallel between the action of Malory's "Tale" and that of the Middle English poem. The similarity does not mean, however, that this poem—or the postulated lost version—is the only source which Malory used. Malory may have known many Arthurian writings: for example, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Layamon, Wace, and other earlier pieces both French and English. In fact a study of "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" yields more evidence to support than to refute the belief that before writing the story of the Roman war Malory had knowledge of some Arthurian
matter besides the alliterative poem. Although the version of the *Morte Arthure* with which Malory was acquainted was probably fuller than that preserved in the Thornton manuscript, we need not assume that every incident in "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" not included in the Thornton manuscript must have appeared in the lost version. A case in point is the passage describing the behavior of certain young knights after the Roman ambassadors have delivered to Arthur the terms of Lucius’ demands:

> Than somme of the yonge knyghtes, heryng this their message, wold have ronne on them to have slayne them, sayenge that it was a rebuke to alle the knyghtes there beyng present to suffre them to saye so to the kynge. And anone the kynge commaunded that none of them upon payne of dethe to myssaye them ne doo them ony harme. (186–87)

Malory's use of this incident, related by Wace but not found in the Thornton manuscript, argues as easily for his familiarity with the work of the Anglo-Norman poet as for his having used a hypothetical lost *Morte Arthure* which contained it. Since the wording and the cadence of the passage do not suggest an alliterative poem as source, we may more reasonably assume

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3 Vorontzoff, "Malory's Story," p. 121, n. 1: "Malory seems to retain ... the characteristic set phrases indicating transition: 'Now leave we ... and speak we' etc., or 'Now turn we to' which he found in his French sources ('or laisse le conte a parler de ... et retourne a parler de')." Although this evidence of Malory's acquaintance with French Arthurian romances before writing "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" is not conclusive, it suggests such knowledge.

4 Ibid., pp. 103–4. Miss Vorontzoff mentions that Wace relates this incident, but does not credit the *Roman de Brut* with being Malory's immediate source. Instead, she postulates a sequence of lost MSS, which carried the incident down into the lost *Morte Arthure* where it was read by Malory.

5 Alliterative passages which echo the phraseology of the *Morte Arthure*
that Malory here borrowed directly from Wace than conjecture that he found the passage in a lost *Morte Arthure*. Both textual evidence and logic therefore suggest that Malory knew other Arthurian romances when he "reduced" the *Morte Arthure* into his "Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius."

Through comparison of this "Tale" with the *Morte Arthure*, we shall see numerous evidences of Malory's originality in treating the material. The main conclusion to which this evidence points is that Malory so adapted the *Morte Arthure* as to fit Tale II into his over-all plan for *Le Marte Darthur*. The discussion which follows will stress three matters: (1) Malory's structural alterations; (2) his changes in characterization of Lancelot and Arthur; and (3) his important shifts in emphasis in presenting Tristram, Gawain, Bors, Kay, and Bedivere.

are to be found throughout "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius."

* This assumption is further supported by Malory's account of the initial battle with Lucius; like Wace, Malory credits Bors with being the first British warrior to seek combat with the Romans, whereas the *Morte Arthure*, following Layamon, gives the adventure to Gawain.

* The unity of *Le Marte Darthur* is not universally accepted. In his edition of the Winchester manuscript, Vinaver explains and defends his now famous theory that Malory's tales were not intended to present a unified history but are separate romances (see *Works*, pp. xxx–xxxv). J. A. W. Bennett in his review of Vinaver's edition, RES, XXV (1949), 161, accepts the theory with qualifications; a review by R. H. Wilson, MP, XLVI (1948), 136, tentatively rejects it, but remarks that Vinaver's inferences have made it impossible any longer to assume the unity of Malory's work without a careful re-examination of the tales; Mary E. Dichmann in "Characterization in Malory's *Tale of Arthur and Lucius*," PMLA, LXV (1950), 877–95, argues against the separate romances theory; and Helen I. Wroten in her 1950 University of Illinois dissertation, "Malory's *Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* Compared with its Source, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," presents cogent arguments for the unity of the work (summarized in *Microfilm Abstracts*, XI [1951], 127–28). In *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages*, *Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford, 1945), II, ii, 190–91, Sir Edmund Chambers, who had some knowledge of Vinaver's conclusions before the publication of *Works*, rejects the theory.
II

The most obvious structural change which Malory made in adapting the plot of the *Morte Arthure* to "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" is his omission of the last 1,128 lines of the poem. The reason for the omission is, of course, clear enough when one considers that Malory was at this point near the beginning of his version of the whole Arthurian story. The last episode of the *Morte Arthure* brings the Arthurian story to a rapid close without mention of the Grail quest and the adultery of Lancelot and Guenevere, material which Malory was to treat in detail before giving his account of the great battle at Salisbury and of Arthur's death.

The portion of the *Morte Arthure* which Malory omits relates the story of Arthur's downfall and death. Just as Arthur has reached the crest of victory and has made arrangements to be crowned by the Pope, he has a fearsome dream, which is interpreted to mean that he is about to suffer a change of fortune. This change comes about very soon when he receives word from Britain that Mordred has seized his kingdom and married Guenevere, who has borne the false viceroy a child. Arthur rushes home to subdue the traitor and, after fierce encounters during which Gawain and other brave knights are killed, meets Mordred in their last battle. Arthur kills Mordred in hand-to-hand combat, but only after he himself has received a mortal wound. Arthur's death does not occur immediately: he has time to remove himself to a manor house near Glastonbury and seek the attentions of a physician before realizing that he is fated to die. When the realization comes to him, he prepares himself to depart this world: he asks for the services of a priest, names
Sir Constantine his heir, and commands that Mordred’s children be slain. He dies soon thereafter and is buried at Glastonbury, lamented by the remnants of his noble court.

That Malory in Tale II ignored this portion of the *Morte Arthure* can best be explained by the theory that he had more extensive plans for his Arthurian presentation than he could execute if he followed closely the course of events in the poem. These plans must have included the incorporation into his own Arthurian narrative of material which, by logic and chronological probability, could have taken place only after the Roman war. Otherwise, it would have been more reasonable for him to have retold the whole story of the *Morte Arthure*.

An equally significant structural change in Malory’s adaptation of the *Morte Arthure* concerns his treatment of Mordred and Constantine. In the alliterative poem Mordred is left as an unwilling regent in Britain upon Arthur’s departure for the Roman war. In “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” he is not mentioned at all, though his birth and the prophecy of his evil-doing were duly noted in the preceding “Tale of King Arthur.” Presumably Malory felt that the time of the Roman war was too early for Mordred to enter into the action of the story; he wanted Mordred’s villainy to mature slowly and did not wish to invest him with importance so early in Arthur’s history. We should also note that Malory borrowed the knight whom the dying Arthur of the *Morte Arthure* designates as his heir, Sir Constantine, to be co-regent with Sir Baudwen of Bretagne during the king’s absence in the campaign against Lucius. This is the Sir Constantine who, according to Malory, “aftir was kynge aftir Arthurs dayes” (195).

These changes from the source are too important to be accidental. They point inescapably to the conclusion that Malory
must have written “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” as part of a larger whole.8

III

The chief figures in Le Morte Darthur are Arthur and Lancelot, the two characters most changed in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” from their portrayal in the Morte Arthure. The most plausible reason for the changes is that Malory had in mind a large, over-all plan for his whole work into which he wanted to fit the appearances of these two knights in Tale II. Thus he toned down the stern, warlike character of Arthur to suit the requirements of the ideal of kingly courtesy and aggrandized the character of Lancelot in order to prepare him for his pre-eminent role in Le Morte Darthur. Lancelot probably presented the more difficult problem. Since he is mentioned only six times in the Morte Arthure,9 a specific place had to be made for him in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius.”

Malory’s aggrandizement of Lancelot begins with the first sentence of “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius”:

Hyt befelle whan kyng Arthur had wedded quene Gwenyvere and fulfylled the Rounde Table, and so aftir his mervelous knyghtis and he had venquyshed the moste party of his enemyes, than sone aftir com sir Launcelot de Lake unto the

8 In The Tragedy of Arthur (pp. 172–73) Matthews discusses Malory’s omission of the last quarter of the alliterative poem. Although he suggests that Malory may have wished to elaborate the history of Arthur and consequently could not kill his hero, he seems to suggest that the chief reason for the omission was the repugnance which Malory felt for the moral ideas presented in the last part of the poem.
9 Morte Arthure, lines 368, 1720, 1999, 2073, 3638, and 4266. It should be noted that lines 3638 and 4266 occur in the section of the poem not used by Malory.
courte, and sir Trystrams come that tyme also, and than kyng Arthur helde a ryal feeste and Table Rounde. (185)

In naming Sir Lancelot second only to the king among the members of the Round Table, Malory sets the pattern that he uses throughout Le Morte Darthur, the pattern of Lancelot’s supremacy. He did not, it should be noted, find this pattern ready-made in the Morte Arthure; the poem makes no mention of Lancelot until he appears as a member of the king’s council, pledging with the others his loyalty to Arthur in the coming war with Rome. In the Morte Arthure it is Gawain who is, aside from Arthur, the indisputable hero.

At the council meeting which Arthur calls after the arrival of the Roman ambassadors to demand that Arthur pay tribute to Rome, Malory follows the Morte Arthure in his description of Lancelot’s behavior, but changes the emphasis to suit his own characterization of the hero. In the Morte Arthure, Lancelot makes the same kind of speech as the other knights who offer their support to the king:

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“By oure Lorde,” quod sir Launcelott, “now lyghttys myne herte!
I loue Gode of this loue this lorde has avowede!
Nowe may lesse mene haue leue to say whatt theme lykes,
And hafe no lettyng be lawe, bot lystynnys thise wordez;
I salle be at joumee with gentille knyghtes,
On a jamby stede fulle jolyly graythide,
Or any journee be-gane to juste with hym selfene,
Emange alle his geauntez genyucrs and other,
Stryke hym styfffyre fro his stcde, with strenghe of myne handys,

10 Even in “The Tale of King Arthur,” which covers the years before Lancelot was old enough to prove himself as a knight, Malory mentions his future prowess (162, 179–80).
ffor alle tha steryne is stour, that in his stale houys!
Be my retenu arayede, I rekke bott a lyttile
To make rowtte in-to Rome, with ryotous knyghtes!
With-in a seuenyghte daye, with sex score helmes,
I salle be seene on the see, saile whene the lykes.” (368–81)

By condensing this speech and slightly changing it, Malory alters Lancelot's stereotyped battle-boast into the bold, ardent promise of a very young man:

Than leece in yong sir Launcelot de Laake with a lyght herte and seyde unto kynge Arthure, “Thoughe my londis marche nyghe thyne enemyes, yet shall I make myne avow aftir my power that of good men of armys aftir my bloode thus many I shall brynge with me: twenty thousand helmys in haubirkes attyred that shall never fayle you whyles our lyvcs lastyth.” (189–90)

A comparison of the two passages quoted above shows the skill with which Malory vitalizes the figure of “young” Lancelot. Adding a significant detail to Lancelot’s statement—the fact that his lands border on Lucius’ domain (and would, therefore, be vulnerable to attack)—he makes Lancelot’s offer of assistance to his king a more daring act and a greater indication of his personal loyalty than it is in the Morte Arthure. Malory also multiplies the number of men whose services Lancelot promises to Arthur from “sex score helmes” to twenty thousand. By these slight changes, Malory’s Lancelot is individualized; the conventional warrior becomes a bold and devoted

11 In a note on Lancelot’s speech, Vinaver remarks that “it is not clear to what lands Lancelot is referring” (Works, p. 1367). If Malory is here allowed knowledge of the whole Arthurian legend, however, it would be clear that he means to designate Lancelot’s own country in France bordering on Lucius’ domain.
youth, whose courage and initiative foreshadow a noble future.\(^\text{12}\)

Later in the story Malory gives Sir Lancelot an important role in adventures in which he plays no part in the *Morte Arthure*. After Arthur has crossed to France and has had his first encounter with Lucius’ forces, he summons several of his chief knights to convoy the Roman prisoners to Paris. In the *Morte Arthure*, the king gives Sir Cador command of the company and names eleven knights to accompany him, excluding Lancelot. In “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius,” however, Malory is consistent with his policy of accenting Lancelot’s importance; he not only adds him to the expedition, but even places him above Sir Cador in command. Having listed the knights whom the king calls to him, Malory says:

\[\ldots\text{ and also [Arthur] \ldots called sir Launcelot in heryn} \\
\text{of all peple, and seyde, “I pray the, sir, as thow lovys me,} \\
\text{take hede to thes other knyghtes and boldely lede thes presoners} \\
\text{unto Paryse towne, there for to be kepeth surely as they me love} \\
\text{woll have. And yf ony rescowe befalle, moiste I affye the in me,} \\
\text{as Jesu me helpe.” (212)}\]

Because Malory has here given Lancelot the place occupied by Sir Cador in the *Morte Arthure*, he finds it necessary to reassign speeches originally made by the latter knight, sometimes giving the entire speech to Lancelot, sometimes allowing Cador

\[^{12}\text{Works, p. 1367. Vinaver’s note on the line, Than leepe in yong sir} \\
\text{Launcelot de Laake with a lyght herte, shows that he also sees a change} \\
\text{in the character of Malory’s Lancelot. He makes here much the same} \\
\text{statement as was made earlier in his article written in collaboration with} \\
\text{E. V. Gordon, “New Light,” p. 85: “Logically [Lancelot] \ldots should} \\
\text{not appear until Book VI, but Malory seems to have already decided to} \\
\text{make him the protagonist, and deliberately enhances the prowess and} \\
\text{glory won by him in the Roman expedition. We are told several times} \\
\text{that Lancelot is still young, having only recently been knighted; yet Malory} \\
\text{will not allow him to be eclipsed by Gawain, who in the Morte Arthure} \\
\text{is far above all other knights.”}\]
to voice his agreement, and sometimes splitting the original speech into dialogue. He never lets the reader forget that it is Lancelot who makes the decisions, Lancelot who gives the commands, and Lancelot who is always first to be addressed (212–16). When Arthur’s knights are ambushed by the Romans and battle is joined, it again is Lancelot who so distinguishes himself in gallantry that Malory interpolates in the story his own editorial comment:

And sir Launcelot ded so grete dedys of armys that day that Sir Cador and all the Romaynes had mervayle of his myght, for there was nother kynge, cayser, nother knyght that day myght stonde hym ony buffette. Therefore was he honoured dayes of his lyff, for never ere or that day was he proved so well, for he and sir Bors and sir Lyonel was but late afore at an hyghe feste made all three knyghtes. (216)

Besides suggesting in this comment the life-long honor that Lancelot will enjoy, Malory stresses his probable future greatness in the account of the conversation between Cador and Arthur after the knights had returned to their camp:

“Sir,” seyde sir Cador, “there was none of us that fayled othir, but of the knyghthode of sir Launcelot hit were mervayle to telle. And of his bolde cosyns ar proved full noble knyghtes, but of wyse wytte and of grete strengthe of his ayge sir Launcelot hath no felowe.”

Whan the kynge herde sir Cador sey such wordys he seyde, “Hym bescmys for to do such dedis.” (217)

Lancelot’s last active appearance in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” is again suggestive of his future greatness; in fact, on this occasion his feats are so notable that he is admired not as a young knight of promise but as a seasoned warrior. The particular adventure in which he is engaged occurs during the final battle with Lucius. The Morte
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Arthure contains brief mention of the incident, but in Malory's hands it is characteristically elaborated.

Than sir Launcelot lepe forth with his stede evyn streyght unto sir Lucus, and in his wey he smote thorow a kynge that stoode althirmexte hym, and his name was Jacoune, a Sarezen full noble. And than he russed forth unto sir Lucyus and smote hym on the helme with his swerde, that he felle to the erthe; and syth he rode thryse over hym on a rowe, and so toke the baner of Rome and rode with hit away unto Arthure hymself. And all seyde that hit sawe there was never knyght dud more worshyp in his dayes. (220; italics mine)

As a result of this passage, we see a Lancelot who has come of age; Malory has completed his development from an eager, newly-made knight to a battle-hardened warrior. Malory's summation of the opinions about Lancelot, given in the italicized sentence at the end of the quotation, shows that the hero has attained full knightly stature. Malory describes him again in the course of the battle, courageously following Arthur in the final rally against Lucius, aiding Sir Lovel to rescue the wounded Bedivere, and pursuing the fleeing Romans to avenge the hurts of Bedivere and Kay (222–24). In the rest of the story Lancelot does not figure until after the final victory when Arthur grants large tracts of the conquered land to him and his cousin Bors (245).

Malory's handling of Lancelot's growth from an untried knight to the acknowledged champion of the battlefield shows careful design, bearing the marks of meticulous and foresighted workmanship. Such care seems to suggest strongly that while writing the story of the Roman wars Malory was thinking of the position Lancelot would have in the coming portions of Le Morte Darthur.

Malory's treatment of the character of Arthur is also important to any discussion of the place held by "The Tale of
King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" in the design of the entire work. Just as Malory aggrandized the character of Lancelot, whom the *Morte Arthure* had almost disregarded, so we find him reshaping the Arthur of the alliterative poem for the apparent purpose of making his character consistent with that of Arthur in the other "Tales" of *Le Morte Darthur*. The changes in his characterization of Arthur are often subtle, but their direction is always the same: they are calculated to convert the king from the chieftain of the *Morte Arthure*, respected for his strength and daring rather than loved for his gentleness, to the chivalric leader, whose courage is tempered by self-control.

The gain in dignity and manliness which Arthur makes through Malory's handling is apparent when parallel passages from the *Morte Arthure* and "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" are examined. First, let us look at Arthur's reaction to the demand of the Roman ambassadors that he pay tribute to Rome. In the lines from the *Morte Arthure* Arthur's rage exhibits itself with primitive violence:

> The kyng blyschit one the beryne with his brode eghne,  
> That fulle brymly or breth brynte as the gledys;  
> Keste colours as kynge with crouelle lates,  
> Luked as a lyone, and on his lypse bytes! (116–19)

In the parallel passage from "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," Malory eliminates the manifestation of Arthur's rage, though not its impact, by concentrating on the grim immobility of the scene: "Whan kynge Arthure wyste what they mente he loked up with his gray yghen and angred at the messyngers passyng sore. Than were this messyngers aferde and knelyd stylle and durste nat aryse, they were so aferde of his grymme countenaunce" (185).

A second example of the increased self-control to be found in
Malory's Arthur occurs after Arthur has reached his domains in France. One of his subjects reports to him the evil deeds of a giant who has been preying upon his people. In both accounts Arthur is grieved, but his manner of showing his grief is very different. In the *Morte Arthure* he again gives way to an exhibition of emotion:

> Thane romyez the ryche kynge for rewthe of the pople, 
> Raykez ryghte to a tente, and restez no lengere! 
> He weltarys, he wristeres, he wryngez hys handez! 
> Thare was no wy of this werlde, that wyste whatt 
> he menede! (888–91)

Arthur's reaction to the same situation in "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" shows a manly restraint: "The kynge seyde, 'Good man, pees! and carpe to me no more. Thy soth sawys have greved sore my herte.' Than he turnys toward the tentys and carpys but lytyll" (199).

The self-control which Arthur exhibits here increases his dignity as a king and a leader of men, for as the truism points out, the ability to command oneself necessarily precedes the ability to command others. Whether or not Malory consciously applied this principle to his study of Arthur's character, he certainly acted upon it in altering the tone of another tempestuous scene in the *Morte Arthure*. In both accounts, as has already been mentioned, a band of knights is assigned to convoy to Paris the prisoners that were taken in the first battle with Lucius' forces. The Romans prepare an ambush for the British knights, but are discovered before they can make a surprise attack. However, in spite of their inferior numbers, Arthur's men decide to join battle with the Romans. The encounter results in victory for the British, but it is a victory that costs the lives of several knights. After delivering the prisoners and returning to the British encampment, Sir Cador reports these facts to
Arthur. In the *Morte Arthure*, the effect on the king is powerful:

Than the worthy kynde wrythes, and wepede with
his eghne,
Karpes to his cosyne sir Cador theis wordez,—
"Sir Cador, thi corage confundez vs alle!
Kowardely thow castez owtte alle my beste knyghtez!
To putte mene in perille, it es no pryce holdene,
Bot the partyes ware puruayede, and powere arayede;
When they ware stade on a strenghe, thou sulde
hafe with-standene,
Bot 3if thowe wolde alle my steryne stroye fore
the nonys!" (1920–27)

In contrast to Arthur, Sir Cador restrains his wrath and answers with dignity:

"Sir," sais sir Cador, "3e knowe wele 3our selfene;
3e are kynde in this kythe, karpe whatte 3ow lykys!
Salle neuer vpbrayde me, that to thi burde langes,
That I sulde blync fore theire boste, thi byddynge
to wyrche;
Whene any stirttez to stale, stuffe thame the
bettere,
Ore thei wille be stonayede, and stroyced in 3one
strayte londez.
I dide my delygens to daye, I doo me one lordez,
And in daungere of dede fore dyuerse knyghttez,
I hafe no grace to thi gree, bot syche grett wordez;
3if I heuen my herte, my hape es no bettyre."
(1928–37)

Realizing the mistake that he has made in upbraiding Sir Cador, Arthur is forced to retract his words:

3ofe sir Arthure ware angerde, he ansuers faire,
"Thow has doughttily donne, sir duke, with thi
handez,
And has donne thy deuer with my dere knyghttez; 
ffor-thy thow arte demyde, with dukes and erlez, 
ffor one of the doughtyeste that dubbede was euer! 
Thare es none ischewe of vs, on this erthe sprongene; 
Thow arte apparant to be ayere, are one of thi 
childyre; 
Thow arte my sister sone, for-sake salle I neuer!"

Malory’s adaptation of this incident shows Arthur in a much better light. He conducts himself with restraint, and he is not compelled to retract an unjustified accusation. He is of course saddened when he hears the list of knights who have been killed, but he does not quarrel with Cador: “Than the kynge wepte and with a keuerchoff wyped his iyen and sayde, ‘Youre corrage and youre hardynesse nerehande had you destroyed, for and ye had turned agayne ye had loste no worshyp, for I calle hit but foly to abyde whan knyghtes bene overmacched’” (217). Here is a sympathetic and respected leader, with whose policy the knights may not always agree, but who will never be reprimanded by them for his lack of gratitude or his heedlessness of their welfare.

Malory particularly emphasizes Arthur’s sympathetic concern for his knights. At the end of the battle in which Lucius is killed, many of them are dead or wounded. Malory says: “... than relevys the kynge with his noble knyghtes and ren-saked over all the feldis for his bolde barouns. And tho that were dede were buryed as their bloode asked, and they that myght be saved there was no salve spared nother no deyntés to dere that myght be gotyn for golde other sylver” (224). Thus far the account of Arthur’s activities after the battle follows the Middle English poem. Then Malory adds his original humanizing statement: “And thus he let save many knyghtes that wente never to recover, but for sir Kayes recovir and of sir Bedwers
the ryche was never man undir God so glad as hymself was” (224). The poem merely remarks,

He bydes for the beryenge of his bolde knyghtez,  
That in batelle with brandez ware broughte owte of lyfe, (2377–78)

and proceeds immediately with a list of the knights and their places of burial. Such a king may be respected for his generalship, but he is not a figure who could draw to him and hold together the fellowship of the Round Table. It is Malory again who supplies the missing ingredients of Arthur’s chivalric greatness.

In accordance with the ideal of chivalry, Arthur should care for the welfare of his humble subjects as well as of his valiant knights. In the Morte Arthure, Arthur’s attitude toward the common people is kindly, but lacks warmth; in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius,” Malory adds the warmth by giving to the story of the king’s battle with the giant a characteristic touch, which shows Arthur’s concern for the poor. This change from the source has to do with the person who reports the giant’s evil deeds to the king; in the Morte Arthure, he is called a “templar” (841), but in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” he is a “husbandman” (198). This alteration, slight as it is, takes Arthur out of exclusive contact with the nobility and puts him into a protective relationship with the commonalty. Although the Morte Arthure (1215–16), like “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” (205), tells us that at the end of the battle Arthur distributes the treasure won from the giant among the people, the effect is not the same, because the poet has not previously shown a personal tie between the king and his subjects.

The height of Arthur’s kingly demeanor is found in the in-

\textsuperscript{13} See also Vinaver’s notes on this passage, p. 1373.
structions which he gives to the Roman senators charged with
convoys the bodies of their dead princes back to Rome after
the slaughter of Lucius and his chief warriors. In the Morte
Arthure the speech is definite and threatening:

“Here are the kystis,” quod the kynge, “kaire
ouer the mownttez;
Mette fulle monee that 3e haue mekylle 3emede,
The taxe and the trebutte of tene shocre wynteres,
That was tenefully tynte in tyme of oure elders.
Saye to the senatoure, the ceté that 5emcs,
That I sende hym the somme, assaye how hyme likes!
Bott byde theme neuere be so bolde, whylles my
blode regnes,
Efte for to brawlle theme for my brode landez
Ne to aske trybut ne taxe be nakyne tytle,
Bot syche tresoure as this, whilles my tyme lastez.”

In “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius,” the
king’s speech is changed in tone from hot anger to grim coolness:

“Now sey ye to the Potestate and all the lordys aftir that I
sende hem the trybet that I owe to Rome, for this is the trew
trybet that I and myne elders have loste this ten score wyntyrs.
And sey hem as mesemes I have sent hem the hole somme,
and yt they thynke hit nat inowe, I shall amend hit whan that
I com. And furthermore, I charge you to seye to them never
to demaunde trybute ne taxe of me ne of my londes, for suche
tresoure must they take as happyns us here.”

Once again Malory has altered the Arthur of the poem to fit
the conception of the king which is found throughout Le Morte
Darthur.14

14 In the Commentary (p. 1387) Vinaver points out that the italicized
line in this quotation was Malory’s addition to the speech, but draws no
conclusion.
IV

In addition to molding the character of Arthur into conformity with his conception of the ideal chivalric king and to preparing Lancelot for the adventures of his glorious future, Malory also concentrates attention upon other knights in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” who are later to play important roles. The most important are Tristram and Gawain. Since Tristram has no part in the Morte Arthure, any reference which Malory makes to him had to be a conscious addition and may be cited as proof both of Malory’s familiarity with the French cycles and of his conscious foreshadowing of succeeding parts of his own story. Tristram is mentioned twice in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius”: first in the introductory paragraph (185), where his name is coupled with Lancelot’s as having arrived at Arthur’s court, and later in the description of the departure of Arthur’s forces for the Roman war. The second instance is as follows: “And sir Trystrams at that tyme beleft with kynge Marke of Cornuayle for the love of La Beale Isode, wherefore sir Launcelot was passing wrothe” (195). In these lines Malory hints at two stories which will later assume great importance in Le Morte Darthur: the stories of Tristram and Isolde and of Lancelot and Guenevere.15

Sir Gawain presented a different problem to Malory from either Lancelot or Tristram, because he figures as importantly in the Morte Arthure as King Arthur himself. In attempting to mold the story of the Roman wars into an episode that functions effectively within the completed whole, Malory found that Gawain had to be de-emphasized, just as Lancelot had to be built up. His solution to this problem was to assign to

15 Gordon and Vinaver in “New Light,” p. 85, comment on Malory’s anticipation of both Tristram and Lancelot in the story of the Roman war.
another knight some of Gawain's adventures in the *Morte Arthure*, and to have other knights accompany Gawain on expeditions which in the source he had undertaken alone. An example of the first device is found in the account of Arthur's initial battle with Lucius: in the *Morte Arthure* (1368 ff.) Gawain is the first of the British warriors to seek a Roman knight in combat, but in Malory's "Tale" (208) this honor is taken from him and given to Bors.16 Then in Malory's account of the last battle with Lucius (222-23) Gawain, who leads an attack alone in the *Morte Arthure* (2218 ff.), is accompanied by Lancelot, Lovel, and various other heroes who equal him in might. By these devices, Malory manages to reduce Gawain's importance.

In adapting one incident from the *Morte Arthure*, Malory seems at first glance to have been inconsistent in his treatment of Gawain by adding to the hero's importance instead of subtracting from it. According to the *Morte Arthure* (1557-88), Sir Ewaine FitzHenry is sorely wounded in the first battle with Lucius; Arthur expresses great concern for him, swearing that a Roman senator who has just been captured will be held as a hostage for his recovery. In Malory's version (211), it is Gawain who is sorely wounded and for whom Arthur is concerned. The probable reason for this inconsistency is that in attempting to give unity to his story Malory has merely substituted a well-known name for an obscure one. Both Vinaver and Wilson point out that such substitutions are common in Malory, whose habit it was to concentrate attention on a few names familiar to the reader instead of mentioning numerous unfamiliar ones.17

16 In a note on this passage (p. 1375) Vinaver remarks the fact that the *Morte Arthure* follows Layamon in giving this adventure to Gawain, but that all other versions give it to Bors or Gerin. This, in itself, seems further evidence of Malory's knowledge of the "French books" before he began writing "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius."

Sir Bors is among the lesser characters in Tale II whom Malory apparently wished to develop for later use. He is, indeed, an important figure in the total history, playing a large part in subsequent tales, particularly in the Grail quest, though he never attains the stature of Lancelot, Tristram, or Gawain. In Tale II, Malory develops him into a character whose courage and knightly behavior the reader will remember.\(^\text{18}\) He begins the aggrandizement of Bors by making him the first knight to seek an encounter with a Roman in battle (208), a distinction that in the *Morte Arthure* (1368 ff.) belongs to the heroic Gawain. He then proceeds to insert Bors into the action of the story, usually in the company of Lancelot. When, for example, the knights who are escorting the prisoners to Paris become aware of the ambush that has been laid for them, both Lancelot and Cador express their eagerness to fight. Agreeing with them, Bors also exhorts the other knights. Like Lancelot's, this speech is an adaptation of part of Cador's speech in the *Morte Arthure* (1726–37):

“Ye sey well,” seyde sir Borce, “lette us set on hem freyshly, and the worshyp shall be oures, and cause oure kyng to honoure us for ever and to gyff us lordshyppis and landys for oure noble dedys. And he that faynes hym to fyght, the devyl have his bonys! And who save ony knyghtcs for lycourc of goodys tylle all be done and know who shall have the bettir, he doth nat knyghtly, so Jesu me helpe!” (214)

Bors' appearances in "The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" after this speech are Malory's original additions, since he is last mentioned in the *Morte Arthure* when his

\(^{18}\) Bors (under the name “Boice” and its variants) is mentioned only five times in the *Morte Arthure*: (1) line 1263, in a list of knights sent as messengers to the Romans; (2) line 1378, as having killed an enemy; (3) lines 1426–56, among other knights doing battle with the Romans; (4) lines 1483–85, as being rescued in battle by Gawain; and (5) line 1605, in the list of knights who are to convoy the prisoners to Paris. See R. M. Lumiansky, “Malory’s Steadfast Bors,” *TSE*, VIII (1958), 5–20.
name is listed among the knights ordered to accompany Sir Cador to Paris with the Roman prisoners. Malory, however, has Bors riding side-by-side with Lancelot and Cador to launch a renewed attack upon the Romans (215). Bors next appears in the company of Lancelot and Clegis, disagreeing with King Arthur's statement that it is folly to fight against great odds (218). Then he takes part in the final battle against Lucius, performing deeds of great prowess (220), which in the Morte Arthure (2081–94) are attributed to Lott; and he is mentioned among the knights who pursue the remnants of the fleeing Romans after their final defeat (224). Finally, like Lancelot and Priamus, he is granted a share of the conquered lands by the King (245). Through all these adventures, Malory seems to have developed Bors, just as he did Lancelot, with an eye to his future role in Le Morte Darthur.

Another characteristic of Malory's narrative technique in Tale II is his careful conservation of knights who will later figure prominently in other tales. In the Morte Arthure both Sir Kay (there called Cayous) and Sir Bedivere are killed in the final battle with Lucius, whereas in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” their wounds are severe but not fatal (222–24). This alteration is significant: since there is no reason for keeping them alive insofar as their subsequent participation in the Roman War is concerned, we may conclude that Malory is saving them for the future when their presence will contribute to the advancement of his plot.

Consideration of the various kinds of evidence presented above leads inevitably to the conclusion that “The Tale of
King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” was written to function as one division of a larger whole, specifically *Le Morte Darthur*. Had Malory not been working in accordance with such a general plan, he would not have found it necessary to increase the importance of some characters, minimize that of others, and introduce still others whose presence in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” is superfluous, but who must be readied for future episodes. The changes, omissions, and additions that become evident in a comparison of Malory’s “Tale” with the *Morte Arthure* are too consistent in their pattern to be accidental. They testify to Malory’s originality of purpose and offer sound evidence that from the beginning he knew the direction which his whole work would take.

The chief evidence of Malory’s artistic intentions in “The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius” lies in his treatment of Lancelot. In his preparation of Tale II, Malory obviously focused his attention on the development of Lancelot for the central role which he was to play in *Le Morte Darthur*, a development which is assumed in the immediately following “Tale of Lancelot.”